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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of on-campus living upon scholastic achievement, dropout rate, and the number of students placed on academic probation, at York College of Pennsylvania. Forty on-campus residents from the 1975-76 freshman class were matched with forty off-campus students with regard to age, sex, intelligence, and marital status. Analysis of academic records revealed that the mean scholastic average of on-campus students was not higher than the average for those off campus, and that attrition and probation rates were not lower for campus residents. In light of these findings, it was recommended that the policy of York College requiring all freshmen to live on campus as an aid to scholastic achievement not be reinstated. Rather, it was suggested that those freshmen wishing to live off campus be released, replacing them with upperclassmen wishing to live on campus. (Author/JDS)

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The Effects Of A Compulsory On Campus Residency
Policy Upon Academic Achievement For Freshmen

by

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York College of Pennsylvania

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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Mussano, Frank P. The Effects of a Compulsory On Campus Residency Policy Upon Academic Achievement for Freshmen. Research Practicum Presented to Nova University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education, October 23, 1976.

The study examined the effect of on campus living upon scholastic achievement, drop-out rate, and the number of students placed on academic probation for a sample of eighty students from the 1975-76 freshmen class. Forty off campus students were matched with forty on campus residents with regard to age, sex, intelligence and marital status. Statistical t test analysis revealed that the mean scholastic average of on campus students was not higher than the average for those off campus. Chi-square analysis confirmed that attrition rate and number of students placed on academic probation was not lower for campus residents.

It was recommended that the policy requiring all freshmen to live on campus under the guise of scholastic merit not be reinstated for the 1977-78 academic year. Rather, it appears more realistic to release those freshmen from the residency policy who wish to leave, replacing them with upperclassmen on the waiting list.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

This paper will examine the effects of a policy requiring freshmen students to live on campus upon academic achievement. Three basic questions are attacked:

- 1) Do freshmen dormitory residents have a significantly higher mean scholastic average than freshmen living off campus?
- 2) Are there a significantly lower number of freshmen dormitory residents placed on academic probation than freshmen living off campus?
- 3) Is there a significantly lower attrition rate for freshmen dormitory residents as compared to freshmen living off campus?

Significance to York College

Over the last four years, the resident student population at York College has steadily increased. Dormitory study rooms have been converted to double occupancy rooms, and five "mini-houses" were purchased to accommodate an additional 67 students during this time period. Even so, the number of students forced to move off campus increased from roughly 80 in 1972 to over 400 in the fall of 1975. Interestingly enough, in 1970 there were vacancies in the residence halls which went unfilled.

To meet the fluctuating demands for student housing, the York College administration has been continually readjusting residency policies. In 1970, all non-local students were required to live in college owned housing. During the 1972 academic year, only freshmen were required to live in the residence halls. When the 1975 and 1976 fall semesters began, the housing needs were so great that no one was required to live on campus.

On July 15, 1976, York College purchased Country Club Manor, an apartment complex close to campus with a potential capacity for housing 254 students. As tenants gradually move out of the complex, additional students will be assigned to move in. In September, 1976, 58 students received assignments to Country Club Manor. It is projected that at least an additional 100 students will be moving into the complex in 1977. This increase in available housing has already stimulated preliminary discussions within the Administrative Council to re-establish the policy requiring all freshmen to live on campus, regardless of their preference. The main premise for such a policy is the assumption that residence halls promote academic achievement, especially with regard to freshmen. This study will either support or reject that notion.

If those freshmen who wish to reside off campus will be at no academic disadvantage, perhaps the college should consider releasing them from the on campus housing requirement. This would then free additional spaces for upperclassmen who prefer to live on campus. If, on the other hand, the premise can be supported, the college would have empirical evidence to justify its policy in discussions with students, faculty, parents, and even legal authorities.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Educators have been suggesting for years through the professional literature that residence hall living is highly conducive to academic development. For example, Stoner and Yokie (1969) conclude: "A residence hall system performs two functions on any campus: 1) it provides for the physical well-being of students and 2) it provides a supplement to the total educational process by providing the proper scholastic environment." Stanford (1969) suggests that easy access to libraries and other benefits typically found in dormitory situations can directly contribute to students' intellectual development. Millman follows this line of thought in stating that residence halls assist the student "by providing a wide variety of educational materials for use during leisure hours, help him learn to cope with change by involving him in planning and policymaking, and encourage him to see that learning gained in living is as valuable as that gained in the classroom."

Moos (1975) surveyed 100 different residence groups on 58 public campuses and 42 private ones, using the University Residence Environment Scales, and a self-report questionnaire. He concluded that on campus living environments "can be very influential in improving academic performance, health, and student satisfaction."

Parents of freshmen also seem to place a great deal of faith in dormitory life. Ellis (1970) surveyed 504 parents of entering freshmen male students at the University of Oregon. Only one in six parents viewed off campus housing for freshmen favorably.

Although it might seem only natural for dormitory living to enhance academic performance, there is empirical data to the contrary. Brother and Hatch (1971) selected eight institutions of higher learning for examining residential impact on students. The findings indicated that type of accommodation had neither a beneficial nor worsening effect upon academic performance.

At the University of Maryland, College Park, Lewis (1973) studied the academic achievement of freshmen students housed in coeducational versus single sex dormitories, high-rise versus low-rise dormitories, and halls with limited visitation versus unlimited visitation hours. No significant differences were found among the students in various types of residences on academic achievement or attrition rates.

Chickering (1971) developed an extensive longitudinal analysis focusing on the "educational outcomes" of the commuter and resident student. He concluded that over a four year period, the commuters and residents were very similar in regard to intellectual development.

Call (1974) matched a sample of 100 resident students and 100 commuters at a small four year liberal arts institution on the basis of sex, age, intelligence, marital status, and college class. He reported that no significant difference was found between the two groups in regard to quality point average.

Students themselves seem largely unconvinced about the scholastic advantages of on campus living. Standing (1969) distributed the House Analysis Survey to 1481 students in 27 residence hall houses at Michigan State University to discover their impressions of house life. Sixty percent completed the survey. The most favorably-rated items were inter-

personal relationships and a general satisfaction with life in the hall and in the house within the hall. The intellectual and cultural life of the house received the least favorable rating.

At the University of Arkansas, Campbell (1973) reported the results of oral interviews with students who were moving out of residence halls, who had already moved off campus, who were friends of dissatisfied residents, or who were still living in campus residences. A major reason for students moving off campus was the feeling that greater control over study conditions could be gained.

Beyond all of this data, Williams (1973) points out that some courts have ruled that students are not obliged to reside on campus unless it can be demonstrated to be educationally beneficial. Hence, simply from a legal perspective, perhaps York College should examine the effects of housing arrangements upon the academic achievement of freshmen students before requiring all new students to live in dormitory facilities. Furthermore, as previously suggested, it may be more advantageous to release those freshmen who wish to move off campus, allowing more room for upperclassmen.

Summary of the Literature

The current professional literature suggests the following:

- 1) Educators and parents believe that dormitory living is highly conducive to academic achievement.
- 2) Empirical studies indicate that living accommodations do not necessarily have a beneficial or worsening effect upon the academic performance of college students.
- 3) Legal authorities and students themselves have become skeptical

about the educational benefits of residence hall living.

With this in mind, the researcher set out to examine the academic achievement of 40 freshmen students who were released from the on campus housing policy during the 1975-76 academic year. These individuals were matched with an equivalent group of 1975-76 freshmen resident students and compared on the basis of: 1) scholastic average, 2) number placed on academic probation, and 3) attrition rate.

PROCEDURES

Definition of Terms

- 1) Academic achievement - defined in any and all of the following three ways: a) scholastic average, b) attrition rate, and c) number placed on disciplinary probation.
- 2) Academic probation - Any freshman student having less than a 1.6 Quality Point Average first semester or less than a 1.7 Q.P.A. second semester will be placed on academic probation. In this study, a student will be considered as being placed on academic probation whether it occurred first semester only, second semester only, or both.
- 3) Dependent variable - age, sex, intelligence, marital and class status (matched pairs sampling technique)
- 4) Drop-out - failure of any freshman student in this study to continue into the sophomore year at York College
- 5) Independent variable - place of residence
- 6) Intervening variable - motivation, values, curriculum, classroom instruction, health, socio-economic status, extra-curricular involvement, social adjustment
- 7) Off campus students - students living off campus in a room, apartment, house or any other facility, but not in their own home
- 8) Persister - any freshman involved in this study who continued into the sophomore year at York College
- 9) Resident students - students living in York College dormitories
- 10) Scholastic average - Quality Point Average computed by dividing the sum of course credits and weighted grades by the total number of credits.

Grades are given the following weights: A = 4; B = 3; C = 2; D = 1; F = 0. For example:

<u>Course Credits</u>		<u>Weighted Grades</u>	
3	x	3 (B)	= 9
6	x	2 (C)	= 12
3	x	4 (A)	= <u>12</u>
			33

33 12 = 2.75 Quality Point Average

11) Quality Point Average - see scholastic average

Limitations of the Study

1) The extent to which York College residence facilities compared to those of other institutions limited the external validity of the investigation.

2) Any of the intervening variables from motivation to socio-economic class may have limited the accuracy of the study.

3) The extent to which the campus facilities under study reflected the total off campus situation limited the generalization of results.

4) The extent to which freshmen Quality Point Average accurately reflected academic achievement limited the accuracy of this study.

5) The extent to which attrition rate accurately reflected academic achievement limited the accuracy of this study.

6) The extent to which placement on academic probation reflected academic achievement affected the validity of the investigation.

Basic Assumptions

- 1) It is assumed that the matching of those freshmen living off campus with dormitory residents resulted in reasonably homogeneous groups.
- 2) It is assumed that Quality Point Average accurately reflected academic achievement.
- 3) It is assumed that attrition rate accurately reflected academic achievement.
- 4) It is assumed that placement on academic probation realistically indicated academic achievement.
- 5) It is assumed that the possible intervening variables did not adversely affect the results of this study.

Procedures for Collecting the Data

- 1) Those 40 freshmen who were released from the York College housing policy and subsequently lived off campus during the 1975-76 academic year were identified from the appropriate housing records. (Originally, 45 such cases were believed to exist. However, a closer examination revealed that 5 of these individuals moved into college owned housing facilities during the second semester.)
- 2) The 40 off campus freshmen were randomly matched with 40 freshmen resident students who attended York College during the same time period. Subjects were then stratified and randomly matched on the basis of age, sex, intelligence, and marital status.
- 3) The following information was obtained for all 80 subjects:
 - a) most recent Quality Point Average
 - b) whether or not the student was placed on academic probation at any time throughout the 1975-76 academic year

- c) whether or not the student returned to York College for the 1976 fall semester

Note - All information required for this study was obtained from records found in the Housing Office, Admissions Office, Computer Center, and Records Office of York College of Pennsylvania.

Procedures for Treating the Data

1) A t test was utilized to compare the mean scholastic average of freshmen resident students with the mean scholastic average of freshmen living off campus. The following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference between the mean scholastic average of freshmen dormitory residents and freshmen living off campus.

Null Hypothesis	$H_0 : \bar{x}_1 = \bar{x}_2$
Alternate Hypothesis	$H_a : \bar{x}_1 > \bar{x}_2$
Level of Significance	$\alpha = .05$
Critical t Value	1.66
Degrees of Freedom	88
One Tailed Test	.95 percentile value

H_0 must be rejected and H_a accepted if $t > 1.66$.

2) A chi-square test was utilized to compare the number of freshmen dormitory residents placed on academic probation with the number of freshmen off campus students placed on academic probation. The following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference between the number of freshmen dormitory residents placed on academic probation and the number of freshmen off campus residents placed on academic probation.

Null Hypothesis	$H_0 : \pi_{P_R} = \pi_{P_0}$
Alternate Hypothesis	$H : \pi_{P_R} < \pi_{P_0}$
Level of Significance	$\alpha = .05$
Critical χ^2 Value	.0039
Degrees of Freedom	1
One Tailed Test	.05 percentile value

H_0 must be rejected and H_a accepted if $\chi^2 < .0039$.

3) A chi-square test was utilized to compare the number of freshmen dormitory residents who drop out of York College with the number of freshmen drop-outs living off campus. The following null hypothesis was tested:

There is no significant difference between the number of freshmen residents who drop out before their second year, and the number of freshmen drop-outs living off campus.

Null Hypothesis	$H_0 : \pi_{D_R} = \pi_{D_0}$
Alternate Hypothesis	$H_a : \pi_{D_R} < \pi_{D_0}$
Level of Significance	$\alpha = .05$
Critical χ^2 Value	.0039
Degrees of Freedom	1
One Tailed Test	.95 percentile value

H_0 must be rejected and H_a accepted if $\chi^2 < .0039$.

RESULTS

The data resulting from the study is as follows:

Hypothesis Number 1

resident students	off campus students
$n_x = 40$	$n_y = 40$
$\sum x = 83.32$	$\sum y = 80.98$
$\sum x^2 = 201.30$	$\sum y^2 = 192.89$
$\sigma_x = .84$	$\sigma_y = .86$
$\bar{x} = 2.08$	$\bar{y} = 2.02$

critical t value = 1.66

calculated t value = .30

The above table records the calculated statistics comparing the mean scholastic average of freshmen resident students with the mean scholastic average of freshmen living off campus. Designated respectively are: the number in each group; sum of scores; sum of scores squared; standard deviation; and mean. Since the calculated t value does not exceed the critical t value at the .05 level, the null hypothesis can not be rejected. The researcher thus concludes that freshmen resident students do not achieve a higher scholastic average than off campus freshmen students.

Hypothesis Number 2

	resident students	off campus students
on academic probation	9	13
not on academic probation	31	27

critical χ^2 value = .0039

calculated χ^2 value = .5642

The above table reveals that 9 of the 40 residents were placed on academic probation while 13 of the off campus students found themselves in the same situation. Since the calculated χ^2 value of .5642 is not less than the critical χ^2 value of .0039, the researcher must accept the null hypothesis. The researcher therefore concludes that freshmen residents do not tend to have a significantly lower number of students placed on academic probation as compared to freshmen living off campus.

Hypothesis Number 3

	resident students	off campus students
drop-outs	5	4
persisters	35	36

critical χ^2 value = .0039

calculated χ^2 value = 0

The above table reveals that 5 of the 40 residents failed to continue into their sophomore year at York College, while 4 of the 40 off campus students dropped out. Since the calculated χ^2 value of 0 is not less than the critical χ^2 value of .0039, the researcher accepts the null hypothesis. Hence the researcher concludes that freshmen residents do not tend to have fewer drop-outs as compared to off campus students.

IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION

It is clear that York College resident freshmen do not achieve a higher scholastic average than freshmen living off campus. Furthermore, on campus residency seems to have no positive effect upon attrition rate or the number of students placed on academic probation for freshmen.

This information has far reaching implications for York College residence life policies. The most obvious of course is that one can hardly justify requiring freshmen to reside on campus on the basis of educational merit if that premise cannot be supported empirically. Perhaps those dormitory programs which supposedly stimulate academic excellence should be re-examined with stricter accountability evaluations. The findings also seem to support the notion that learning need not be campus centered, but can be accomplished very effectively throughout the community in a more non-traditional manner.

However, unanswered are questions in regard to interpersonal relationships. Is socialization more immediate and effective on campus? Do attitudes differ as residency status changes? What about independent living skills and emotional adjustment? Perhaps a substantial case for requiring freshmen to live on campus can be developed through examination of these variables. Furthermore, the Office of Residence Life may then be able to better isolate and improve upon those housing variables which effect students directly. Energies could thus be expended more effectively in assisting students both on and off campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) The Office of Residence Life can not empirically justify reinstating the requirement for all freshmen to live on campus on the basis of educational merit.

2) A copy of this study will be submitted to the Academic Council recommending that those freshmen who prefer to live off campus be released from the York College residency requirement, with the understanding that upperclassmen who wish to live in a residence hall will fill the subsequent vacancies.

3) The Office of Residence Life has an obligation to further examine the variables which may distinguish residents from off campus students with the intention of further improving the quality of life for all students.

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